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ABSTRACT

A course entitled "In Another Country: Perspectives on Human Values" is being initiated in Manor Junior College (Pennsylvania) in an attempt to revitalize liberal arts offerings while making them relevant to career oriented students. Satisfying composition and philosophy requirements, this experimental six credit course will be offered to allied health care and business students to help them utilize writing, philosophical inquiry, and literature to explore the processes human beings must undergo to make responsible choices. The first unit of the course, "Efficiency," reflects the values of the students who are going to take it. The second unit, "Alienation and Invisibility." examines the implication of a value system that stresses efficiency through the study of literature and philosophy. The next unit, "Death: Loss, Limit, and Vulnerability," explores the way in which alienated individuals try to cope with death. The final unit, "Hope and Choosing," stresses the vast range of choices that exist on the continuum between freedom and determinism. (Detailed lesson plans and model exercises are included.) (JL)

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Core Program Resuscitation for Liberal Arts

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October 1, 1982

CS207175

Manor Junior College is undergoing the process of intense self-evaluation and long-term planning. Originally a liberal arts college, Manor has shifted to an almost exclusively career oriented school, training 95% of its students for business or allied health jobs, while maintaining its liberal arts core. Most of our students are highly motivated to get their degrees quickly and to learn the specific skills they'll need to acquire well-paying jobs in their fields. As a result, we, as liberal arts teachers, are faced with a group of bright, lively students, impatient of any discipline devoid of technical content and not clearly related to their career interests. Acutely and painfully aware of their distinctly negative attitudes towards liberal arts courses, we've found ourselves beginning each term with attempts to justify the relevance of philosophy or history, for example, to students focused entirely on becoming competent legal secretaries or medical assistants. And although we know that the thinking, writing, organizational and problem-solving skills they could get from our courses are invaluable and necessary to all fields as well as to life, these justifications are generally ineffective in convincing the students that their attendance in our classes is anything more practical or relevant than some mystifying initiation rite or trial by fire through which they must pass before they can get to their important business of learning how to make money.

Unfortunately, until this year our liberal arts department has had little cohesion among its own courses and no integration with the career-oriented courses in the college. This fragmentation has reinforced our students' feelings about the separateness and irrelevance of liberal arts in general and of the isolation of the various disciplines we teach. Fortunately, the administration, in its commitment to a strong liberal arts core curriculum, is determined to support our search for ways to revitalize our liberal arts offerings, making them relevant to our students while maintaining their academic integrity.

Our course is entitled In Another Country: Perspectives on Human Values and is our first step in integrating our liberal arts courses with one another and with other disciplines. Satisfying the Composition II and Philosophy requirements, this six credit course will be offered on an experimental basis in the Spring of 1983, utilizing writing, philosophical inquiry, and literature to explore the processes human beings must undergo to make responsible choices. The students in this pilot course will come from both the allied health and business divisions, so that the focus will not be specifically on their fields. In the Summer of 1984, we will create allied health units of supplementary material to be integrated into the various units we cover. These units will include case studies, articles from professional journals, reading selections from various disciplines which relate to health care and specially created learning exercises. The units will be

organized around the themes addressed in the course In Another Country and will serve as either supplementary or required materials. Finally, if the course is successful, it will become a requirement for all Manor students and serve as a model for resuscitating our entire liberal arts core program.

At the very beginning of our revision process, then, we are examining our own priorities. First, we want to retain the ideal of Liberal Arts as the means to liberate individuals, accomplished by the students' evaluation of their own cultural heritage and their awareness of options and other points of view. Second, we want to offer the students in the career programs the opportunity to develop basic educated skills which would increase their value to prospective employers. Our procedure will be comprised of specifically sequenced content and will emphasize the study and development of the writing process itself. Through carefully selected readings and experiences, the students would move from a basically egocentric value system to one that acknowledges other perspectives, hopefully developing the rather elusive abilities to empathize and sympathize, to project themselves into another's situation and sensibility. In a similar way, through sequenced larger writing assignments, the students would be required to move, as James Moffet suggests, from a basically ego-centric writer-based style to a more public reader-based prose.[1] Shorter daily writing and collaborative learning

exercises[2] would reinforce this overall development from egocentric to public perspective, also helping the student generate and explore ideas, clarify and develop relationships, and evaluate systems--all geared to accomplish the objectives and competencies outlined in the attached syllabus.

In designing the format, we want to create a course which would avoid two extremes often found in team taught courses. Sometimes team taught courses have two instructors from two disciplines sharing thematic or chronological progression, with little actual collaboration between the two. On the other end, sometimes interdisciplinary courses become so intermeshed that the course loses the two distinct disciplinary perspectives. Dr. Seltzer and Ms. Knop seek a happy medium: retain the identity of each discipline and at the same time avoid fragmentation. Philosophy and literature are interdisciplinary by nature, and our course reflects that fact. The first time the course is offered on an experimental basis in the Spring of 1983, both Dr. Seltzer and Ms. Knop will be actively involved in the entire six hours per week. The instructors will be compensated for one three credit course. Dr. Seltzer and Ms. Knop are contributing the extra three hours since they see this as part of their own professional development. However, in the future, each instructor will be responsible for and compensated for one three-credit course. We feel that it is not financially feasible to compensate two instructors for the full six credits, and it is not necessary for the success of the interdisciplinary course.

We begin with a unit that very much reflects the students' value systems as young Americans who need in as short a period of time as possible to earn a living. Primarily, they are focused on Efficiency, on becoming efficient health care and business professionals, on living their lives efficiently with a maximum of money, material benefits, and pleasure. For example, on a writing placement exam that was given in 1981, in response to a question on success and happiness, most of the entering freshmen defined success as monetary and happiness as based on their monetary success. So, by beginning the course with readings that reflect their orientation, we're allowing them to participate in the literature and philosophy -- while they're still in a basically egocentric state. They easily dismiss alternative views and certainly avoid empathy with those outside their group by using every defense mechanism at their disposal. We begin with this restrictive vision with the hope of demonstrating its limitations.

In our next unit, Alienation and Invisibility, we examine the implications of a value system that stresses efficiency. What are the psychological and philosophical dynamics, for example, operating within the strange victim-oppressor relationships evidenced throughout the world? Tracing this theme from its intimate manifestation in Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" to its more grandiose appearance in the form of Imperialism in Orwell's "Marrakech", the students analyze the process by which an oppressor dehumanizes and makes his victim invisible. He blocks identification which enables him to commit atrocities

without the discomfort of guilt. And what is the cause-effect relationship between our society's mechanistic emphasis on products and the alienation decried by Marx and hilariously dramatized by Jules Feiffer? By this point, then, our students should have examined the effects of American functionalism in discussion and writing, and should be moving beyond their own limited vantage points to an understanding of the dangers of a restrictive vision.

The third unit, Death: Loss, Limit and Vulnerability, explores the ways in which the alienated individuals we've been examining attempt to cope with the inevitable loss, limit and vulnerability epitomized in death. Probably one of our students' strongest and most highly charged emotional investments is in denying their own vulnerability and death. If we've seen them in Unit 2 using complicated defense mechanisms such as "invisibility" to block out the pain evoked by their direct or indirect actions, how much greater and more powerful are the mechanisms they use to avoid realization of their own mortality. Building on their hopefully increased capacity to empathize and identify with those outside their accustomed frame of reference, we'll use, first, controlled dramatic experiences and writing to put them in touch with some of their repressed attitudes and emotions about death and vulnerability. Then, in both our selected readings in literature and philosophy and structured classroom experiences,

we'll present more formalized and generalized ways of talking, writing and thinking about death. Using our students' willingness to consider alternative viewpoints, in this unit we'll be asking them to utilize their newly developed skills of identification on the most difficult challenge of all--to confront their own, and all human beings', limitation in death--without which, as Martin Heidegger says, we can't begin to make responsible, authentic choices.

After the students have a clear realization of the inevitable and unalterable conditions to which human beings are subject, we move to our final unit on Hope and Choosing. Here our aim is maximum exposure to the vast range of choices that exist on the continuum between freedom and determinism. By now our students should have acquired the thinking, writing, communication and humanistic skills to consider these options with some methodology, hopefully without being threatened by either the "strangeness" of the concepts or by the realities of the human condition that they've spent most of their lives repressing or denying.

What we've provided them with by this point are some of the educated skills and awareness they'll need to evaluate and choose responsibly. With this kind of increased sensitivity, it would seem but a small step to appropriate behavior. If the students have undergone and are committed to the process of asking themselves, "How would I feel in this person's situation?" to "How

would I want to be treated in this situation?" they should be able to discover "How as a business and health care professional I should treat others." We'd like to see ourselves as tour guides leading them through another country and returning them home transformed.[3]

In Another Country: Perspectives on Human Values

A course cluster in philosophy and composition (6 credits)

A study of the values of twentieth century American society which influence individual decision making. The course focuses on helping the student to become aware of the sources of her values and the importance of making autonomous decisions. The primary aim of the course is to move the student from a one-dimensional, narrow view of reality to an appreciation of other views of the world. The outcome should be a more tolerant and empathetic view of other perspectives. The vehicles for this development will be readings from literature and philosophy, writing assignments which move the student from writer-based to reader-based writing, and highly structured classroom experiences.

Prerequisite: English 101

Team-taught by Dr. Madeline Seltzer, English instructor and Ms. Anne Knop, Philosophy instructor

Anticipated enrollment: 25 students

Students will be encouraged to develop through writing and speaking the following educated skills:

1. The ability to locate key ideas, thesis statements and/or topic sentences.[4]
2. The ability to paraphrase key ideas or key passages.
3. The ability to acknowledge sources of information.
4. The ability to comprehend a literal meaning and then move to a symbolic or implied meaning.
5. The ability to separate evidence from inference and to identify the kinds of evidence provided.
6. The ability to recognize underlying assumptions.
7. The ability to evaluate the soundness of an argument.
8. The ability to view an idea and its exposition as a whole; to see the relationship of key ideas and its medium of expression.

9. The ability to evaluate the clarity of others' work as well as one's own. The ability to judge when sufficient information is presented and when information is presented clearly.

10. The ability to formulate one's own line of reasoning by drawing inferences from data and evidence.

11. The ability to visualize hypothetical outcomes of specific perspectives and/or to carry out a line of hypothetical reasoning to its conclusion.

12. The ability to check personal reasoning for internal consistency; to check it by alternate paths of reasoning, and to examine limitations of this kind of thinking by constructing extreme examples.

13. The ability to present ideas in speech and writing with an awareness of audience.

14. The ability to express one's own ideas in a variety of modes.

15. The ability to tolerate, understand and evaluate positions different from one's own.

16. The ability to choose and affirm ideas which are found personally satisfying.

Texts: supplied by instructors
John Langan, Sentence Skills

Requirements: 3 essays (1,000 words each)
2 examinations
academic journal
1,000 words of writing per week
writing folder
class attendance at all meetings

Objectives: outlined in syllabus (attached)

SYLLABUS

UNIT I - Efficiency: emphasis on products, success, money, technology, ends without consideration of means in American society.

Week 1

Class 1 - Theme: values clarification
Objectives: to help the student become aware of her own values, the sources of her values, and how to establish criteria for judging values.
Strategies: private writing *
collaborative learning *

Class 2 - Theme: introduction to course
Objective: to give philosophy of course, requirements, format and first paper assignment.
Strategies: lecture
questions and answers

Week 2

Class 1 - Theme: interrelationship of society and human nature
Objectives: to help the student understand one theory of human nature; to explore civilization as a source of human values.
Readings: "Outpost of Progress" - Joseph Conrad
Selections from Leviathon - Thomas Hobbes
Strategies: private writing
collaborative learning to generate questions on assignment
writing assignment to focus reading *
class discussion

Class 2 - same as above
Strategies: brainstorming on paper assignment
peer groups - topic choice
class discussion of readings
collaborative learning on passages from the readings

* See attached for examples

Week 3

Class 1 - Theme: relationship of society to the individual
Objective: to have the student consider the view of society as exploitive and destructive of the individual
Readings: "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" - Randall Jarrell
Strategies: private writing
class discussion
peer review of first rough draft
collaborative learning

Class 2 - Theme: individual's reaction to destructive trends in modern society
Objective: to explore some alternative responses to modern society
Reading: selections from The Sane Society -- Eric Fromm
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
collaborative learning

Week 4

Class 1 - Theme: writing as a means of learning
Objective: to show the student some techniques of writing; to encourage the student to see her writing as work in progress
Strategies: writing exercises
individual conferences
peer review of second rough draft

Class 2 - Theme: individual's response to overwhelmingly technological society in which efficiency is the ultimate virtue
Objective: to experience all the issues the student has been exploring in this unit through film
Movie: Days of Heaven - Terrence Malick
Strategies: private writing
collaborative learning

UNIT II - Alienation and Invisibility: ways in which the individual perceives herself in a society that stresses efficiency

Week 5

Class 1 - Theme: the isolation of the individual in a product-oriented society
Objective: to show the student the human isolation resulting from a society in which individualism is highly prized
Readings: "A Clean Well Lighted Place" - Ernest Hemingway
selections from On Liberty - J.S. Mill
Strategies: private writing
collaborative learning
writing assignment to focus reading
Final paper due (3-5 pages typed)

Class 2 - same as above
Assign paper topic

Week 6

Class 1 - Theme: the victim/oppressor relationship that leads to alienation and invisibility
Objectives: to understand the psychological process that leads to invisibility; to understand the economic and historic conditions that lead to alienation

Readings: "Marrakech" - George Orwell
selections from Communist Manifesto - Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels
Strategies: collaborative learning on paper assignment
writing assignment to focus reading
collaborative learning
private writing

Class 2 - same as above
Strategies: private writing
role playing
brainstorming on topic

Week 7

Class 1 - Theme: invisibility
Objective: to help the student recognize the need to identify with alien perspectives of the world
Readings: "Animal Liberation" - Peter Singer
"A Modest Proposal" - Jonathan Swift
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
collaborative learning

Class 2 - Theme: victims and oppressors
Objectives: to help the student understand the formation of the values of victims in society
Readings: "Raffles and Miss Blandish" - George Orwell
selections from Second Sex - Simone de Beauvoir
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
class discussion
peer review of first rough draft
Midterm exam

Week 8

Class 1 - Theme: victim turns oppressor
Objectives: to show outcome of the victim/oppressor relationship in film
Movie: Little Murders - Jules Feiffer
Strategies: private writing
collaborative learning
peer review and individual conferences on second draft (outside of class time)

UNIT III - Death: Loss, Limit, and Vulnerability: the American experience of death exemplifies the inability of the alienated individual to cope with loss, limit, and vulnerability

Week 8

Class 2 - Theme: American denial of death and vulnerability
Objective: to assist the student to bring to the surface feelings and questions concerning the experience of death

Readings: none
Strategies: private writing
role playing
collaborative learning

Week 9

Class 1 - Theme: philosophical views of death
Objectives: to broaden the student's understanding of different views of death
Readings: "Sarcophagus" - Richard Selzer
"3 Ravens" - anonymous
"Death" - Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
collaborative learning
Final paper due

Class 2 - Theme: the process of dying
Objective: to empathize with the dying person's experience of estrangement, loss, and vulnerability
Readings: selections from On Death and Dying - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross
"Metamorphosis"- Franz Kafka
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
class discussion
Assign third paper topic

Week 10

Class 1 - Theme: the existential view of death
Objective: to become aware of one way of making meaning out of death: the existential appropriation of my death
Readings: selections from Being and Time - Heidegger, "In Another Country," "The Killers," "Indian Camp" - Ernest Hemingway
"Spring and Fall to a Young Child" - Gerard Manley Hopkins
Strategies: collaborative learning to generate questions on assignment
private writing
role playing

Class 2 - Theme: the ultimate confrontation
Objective: to aid the student in arriving at a personal appropriation of the meaning of death
Film: The Seventh Seal - Ingmar Bergmann
Reading: "Death Knocks" - Woody Allen
Strategies: brainstorming on topic
private writing
collaborative learning

Unit IV - Hope and Choosing: the individual's response to the limitations and possibilities inherent in the different attitudes examined in the course

Week 11

Class 1 - Theme: the search for options
Objective: to explore the ways in which human persons have attempted to transcend their limitations: the ideal vision and the absurd vision.
Readings: "Allegory of the Cave" - Plato
Barrabas - Par Lagerkvist
"The Myth of Sisyphus"- Albert Camus
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
collaborative learning

Class 2 - same as above
Peer review of first draft

Week 12

Class 1 - Theme: the absence of freedom in a deterministic world
Objective: to present the view of man as determined; to discuss man's flight from the responsibility of freedom
Readings: selections from Walden Two - B.F. Skinner, "Grand Inquisitor" from The Brothers Karamazov -Fyodor Dostoevsky
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
collaborative learning
individual conferences and peer review

Class 2 - same as above

Week 13

Class 1 - Theme: the existential view of freedom
Objective: to present view of man as "condemned to freedom"; to understand the responsibility of freedom
Readings: "Defense of Existentialism"— Jean-Paul Sartre
"Sonnet on his Blindness" — John Milton
"Soldier's Home" - E. Hemingway
"The Guest" - A. Camus
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
class discussion

Class 2 - same as above
Final conferences on paper

Week 14

Class 1 - Theme: the triumph of human values over dehumanizing trends in modern society
Objectives: to emphasize the importance of human values for the survival of mankind; to encourage the student to become a free, autonomous, value-creating and value-preserving person
Readings: selections from "The Will to Believe"— William James
selections from Zen and the Art of Maintenance - Robert Pirsig
Strategies: private writing
writing assignment to focus reading
collaborative learning

Class 2 - same as above
Film: 2001: A Space Odyssey - Stanley Kubrick
Strategies: private writing
collaborative learning
Final paper due

Week 15

Final Examination

Private Writing Exercise

Read through the following list of words and write down anything that comes to your mind. It's important that you neither censor nor evaluate these initial thoughts. Just record your immediate reactions.

myself

men

women

divorce

God

religion

police

doctors

teachers

death

freedom

mother

father

marriage

Writing Assignment to Focus Reading

The following is a list of terms from Thomas Hobbes' Leviathon. Please use eight out of the ten words listed and write a coherent paragraph which establishes relationships among the terms.

equality	diffidence
war	common power
right and wrong	competition
faculties	nature
conservation	peace

Collaborative Learning for Values Clarification

Instructions.

Once the groups have been formed, please introduce yourselves to each other. Then please agree on one person to record the views expressed in the group and the decisions the group makes collectively. The recorder will speak for the group.

1. One person (not the recorder) read these instructions aloud to the group.

2. As a group, choose one of the words listed on the private writing exercise sheet to discuss.

3. Each person in the group share some or all of her responses to the word chosen.

4. Arrive at a consensus in answer to each of the following questions:

   a. What values do you see underlying these responses? (List three).

   b. What do you see as the source(s) of these values? (List three).

5. Review the recorder's notes to make sure they express accurately what the group has done and decided.

Study Questions for "An Outpost of Progress"

1. What do you think the old man means when he says "They will form themselves there."?

2. Explain the ways in which society has formed Kayerts and Carliers.

3. When Kayerts and Carlier arrive at the Outpost, what are the sources of their values?

4. At the end of the story, what are the sources of their values?

5. Why do you think Conrad had Kayerts stick out his tongue at the Managing Director?

ENDNOTES

[1]James Moffet, Teaching The Universe of Discourse (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968).

[2]Ken Bruffee of Brooklyn College has done extensive work in collaborative learning theory. Dr. Bruffee addressed the 1982 NEH Summer Institute on Writing in the Humanities held at Beaver College, Pennsylvania.

[3]This article is the result of the authors' participation in the 1982 NEH Summer Institute on Writing in the Humanities held at Beaver College, Pennsylvania. The authors are grateful for the ideas shared with us by the seminar staff: Dr. Elaine P. Maimon, Dr. Jerry Belcher, Dr. O'Connor and Dr. Peggy Horadavich.

[4]We'd like to thank J. Lewis Schlegel III of Valencia Community College for sharing his ideas with us concerning many of these competencies.